AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

The following is a marked-up version of the claims with the language that is underlined ("___") being added and the language that contains strikethrough ("——") being deleted:

1. (Currently Amended) A communication method ~~comprising the steps of:~~ comprising:

receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ user to a ~~first recipient;~~ second user; ~~and~~

prompting the first ~~sender~~ user for permission to convey the IM message to ~~the second recipient.~~ a third user;

determining whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and

indicating to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ comprising:

receiving an input from the first ~~sender,~~ user, the input being indicative of the permission to convey the IM message to the ~~second recipient;~~ third user; and

conveying the IM message to the ~~second recipient~~ third user in response to receiving the input.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ comprising:

indicating to the first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> that the IM message is being conveyed to the ~~second recipient.~~ <u>third user.</u>

4.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ <u>comprising:</u>

indicating to the ~~second recipient~~ <u>third user</u> that the IM message originated from the first ~~sender.~~ <u>user.</u>

5.   (Canceled)

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ <u>comprising:</u>

waiting a predefined time interval prior to ~~requesting~~ prompting the first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> for permission.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ <u>comprising:</u>

indicating to the first ~~sender,~~ <u>user,</u> in the absence of a response from the ~~first recipient~~ <u>second user</u> during the predefined time interval, that the ~~first recipient~~ <u>second user</u> is unavailable.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein ~~the step of~~ requesting permission from the first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> is responsive to an absence of an input from the ~~first recipient~~ <u>second user</u> during the predefined time interval.

9.   (Currently Amended) A communication method ~~comprising the steps of:~~

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comprising:

    receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ user to a ~~first recipient; and~~ second user;

    conveying the IM message to a ~~second recipient.~~ third user;

    determining whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and

    indicating to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.

    10.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 9, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ comprising:

    indicating to the first ~~sender~~ user that the IM message is being conveyed to the ~~second recipient.~~ third user.

    11.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 9, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ comprising:

    indicating to the ~~second recipient~~ third user that the IM message originated from the first ~~sender.~~ user.

    12.   (Canceled)

    13.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, further ~~comprising the step of:~~ comprising:

    further indicating to the first ~~sender,~~ user, in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an IM chat session with a ~~second sender,~~ fourth user, that an IM chat

session is being established between the first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> and the ~~second recipient.~~ <u>third user.</u>

14. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

receive logic configured to receive an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> to a ~~first recipient;~~ <u>second user;</u> and

prompting logic configured to prompt the first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> for permission to convey the IM message to ~~the second recipient.~~ <u>a third user;</u>

<u>determining logic configured to determine whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and</u>

<u>indicating to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.</u>

15. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

means for receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> to a ~~first recipient;~~ <u>second user;</u> and

<u>means for</u> prompting the first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> for permission to convey the IM message to ~~the second recipient.~~ <u>a third user;</u>

<u>means for determining whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and</u>

<u>means for indicating to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.</u>

16. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to receive an

instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ user to a ~~first recipient;~~ second user; and

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to prompt the first ~~sender~~ user for permission to convey the IM message to ~~the second recipient.~~ a third user;

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to determine whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.

17.   (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 16, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to receive an input from the first ~~sender,~~ user, the input being indicative of the permission to convey the IM message to the ~~second sender;~~ fourth user; and

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to convey the IM message to the ~~second recipient~~ third user in response to receiving input from the first ~~sender.~~ user.

18.   (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 17, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the first ~~sender~~ user that the IM message is being conveyed to the ~~second recipient.~~ third user.

19.   (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 17, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the

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~~second recipient~~ <u>third user</u> that the IM message originated from the first ~~sender.~~ <u>user.</u>

20.　　(Canceled)

21.　　(Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 16, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to wait a predefined time interval prior to requesting the input from the first ~~sender.~~ <u>user.</u>

22.　　(Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the first ~~sender,~~ <u>user,</u> in the absence of a response from the ~~first recipient~~ <u>second user</u> during the predefined time interval, that the ~~first recipient~~ <u>second user</u> is unavailable.

23.　　(Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

receive logic configured to receive an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ <u>user</u> to a ~~first recipient;~~ <u>second user;</u> and

conveying logic configured to convey the IM message to a ~~second recipient.~~ <u>third user;</u>

<u>determining logic configured to determine whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and</u>

<u>indicating logic configured to indicate to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.</u>

24.　　(Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

means for receiving an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ user to a ~~first recipient;~~ second user; and

means for conveying the IM message to a ~~second recipient.~~ third user;

means for determining whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and

means for indicating to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.

25.   (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to receive an instant messaging (IM) message from a first ~~sender~~ user to a ~~first recipient;~~ second user; and

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to convey the IM message to a ~~second recipient.~~ third user;

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to determine whether the second user is currently engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user; and

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the first user, in response to determining that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a fourth user, that the second user is engaged in an IM chat session with the fourth user.

26.   (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 25, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the first ~~sender~~ user that the IM message is being conveyed to the ~~second recipient.~~ third user.

27.   (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 25, further

comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to indicate to the ~~second recipient~~ third user that the IM message originated from the first ~~sender.~~ user.

28. (Canceled)

29. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of ~~claim 28,~~ claim 25, further comprising:

computer-readable code adapted to instruct a programmable device to further indicate to the first ~~sender,~~ user, in response to determining that the ~~first recipient~~ second user is engaged in an IM chat session with a ~~second sender,~~ fourth user that an IM chat session is being established between the first sender and the ~~second recipient.~~ third user.